

# SPILT MILK

THE IMPROV TOOL FOR HANDLING BIG FEELINGS!



Lesson One: Feelings/Emotions



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## Why think about our BIG feelings?

Feelings are a normal part of life. They help us figure out the world around us. The way we feel about something helps us figure out if it is good or bad for us, if it is something we want in our lives or not, and whether or not we need to protect ourselves from it. So, feelings are fantastic!

### **However...**

We've all experienced those feelings that are helpful but don't, well, *feel* so great. They make us want to scream or cry or hit or run away. They make us fight with others or disappear into ourselves. They often make us want to do things that will get us in trouble. And they do get us in trouble.

This is why we need to think about our BIG feelings!

Because while they are perfectly normal, they can cause us to want to behave in ways that aren't good for ourselves or others.

We have all come together not just to have fun and make great theatre, but to learn new ways of behaving when our feelings become too much for us.

And what's the best way to learn anything?

By practicing!

Because repetition helps us remember things!

So, let's get ready to talk about BIG feelings, discover different ways to cope with them, and practice, practice, practice (while having a really great time).

## Lesson One: Feelings/Emotions



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What are feelings?

Feelings are the way your body and your mind react to a person, thing, or situation.

For example...

If someone you love gave you a hug, you might feel happy!

If someone you love snuck up and gave you a hug, you might feel surprised!

If someone you don't like gave you a hug, you might feel annoyed or disgusted.

If someone gave you a hug you didn't want, you might feel angry.

And if a gorilla walked into the bathroom while you were brushing your teeth and gave you a hug, you'd probably feel confused. ...And scared. ...And overwhelmed.

These are just some of the feelings we might feel at any time!

Sometimes we feel small things that don't affect us very much.

Like taking a bite of a really good chocolate chip cookie (gentle happiness, makes you grin) or breaking a shoelace (mild disappointment, makes you shrug).

Sometimes we feel things in a big way, but we can calm ourselves.

Like winning \$1 million (you'd probably scream for a minute, but then you'd stop) or losing a baseball game (you might growl and make fists, but you wouldn't actually hit anybody).

But, sometimes we feel big, huge feelings that overwhelm us.

Like getting very, very confused or very, very scared, or very, very angry.

And these are the times we want to be able to find self-control and not melt down.

Because no one likes to melt down!

So, let's learn how to wrangle our feelings with Spilt Milk.

**In this lesson, we'll learn about feelings and how to portray them in improv!**

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How many feelings are there?

Well... maybe more than we can count! Because there are not just different emotions but so many different ways to feel them!

However, anyone who has seen the movie "Inside Out" knows the Big Six...

Think about happiness.

It's always a good feeling. It always makes you want to smile.

But, sometimes it feels like contentment (everything is fine, nothing is wrong) and sometimes it feels like elation (you want to jump up and down and sing!) and sometimes it feels like awe (you may not have words to express how you are feeling, you just stare in wonder). Can you think of other ways to experience happiness?

Now think about sadness.

It's usually a pretty bad feeling.

It usually makes you want to sigh or cry.

But sometimes it feels just a little gloomy (a generally "blah" feeling) and sometimes it means feeling discouraged (defeated, like you'll never win) and sometimes it's being heartbroken (sobbing, clutching your heart).

Finally, think about fear.

This one is often a bad feeling - you don't feel safe, you want help!

But it can also be a good feeling - like the rush of being on a roller coaster or seeing a scary movie.

Everybody feels their feelings in different ways, but there are some common ways we can show others what we are feeling.

Let's explore how the six main feelings can look!

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## Happiness

Usually a pleasant feeling - warm inside, joyful, buzzy

Facial expressions: grinning, smiling

Body language: relaxed, open, energized

Tone of voice: higher, upbeat, singsong

It can mean feeling fine. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling really good. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling on top of the world! What would that look like?

How would it affect the way you listen, speak, walk? Stand up and give it a try!

## Sadness

Usually an unpleasant feeling - heavy, empty, low energy

Facial expressions: eyes cast down, frowning

Body language: sluggish, hunched over, hugging self

Tone of voice: slower, quieter

It can mean feeling mildly blue. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling extremely down. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling devastated. What would that look like?

How would it affect the way you listen, speak, walk? Stand up and give it a try!

## Fear

Sometimes uncomfortable, sometimes thrilling - shaky, anxious, heart racing

Facial expressions: eyes wide, mouth open, looking around

Body language: hands to face, trembling, breathing heavily

Tone of voice: higher, upbeat, singsong

It can mean feeling somewhat uneasy. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling actively frightened. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling absolutely terrified! What would that look like?

How would it affect the way you listen, speak, walk? Stand up and give it a try!

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## Anger

Usually an unpleasant feeling - hot, clenched, turning red

Facial expressions: teeth gritted, eyes narrowed, brows lowered

Body language: body tensed, wide stance, leaning forward

Tone of voice: fast, loud, possibly yelling

It can mean feeling generally annoyed. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling pretty riled up. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling like you need to punch a pillow! What would that look like?

How would it affect the way you listen, speak, walk? Stand up and give it a try!

## Disgust

Usually an unpleasant feeling - offended, nauseated, appalled

Facial expressions: wrinkled nose, mouth pursed, tongue out

Body language: head turned away, hand over face, gagging

Tone of voice: disapproving, downward pitch, choked

It can mean feeling mildly offended. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling pretty grossed out. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling like you could throw up! What would that look like?

How would it affect the way you listen, speak, walk? Stand up and give it a try!

## Surprise

Sometimes uncomfortable, sometimes fun - shaky, heart racing, titillated

Facial expressions: eyebrows raised, mouth open, eyes darting

Body language: hands to face, trembling, breathing heavily

Tone of voice: loud, energized, quick

It can mean feeling mildly startled. What would that look like?

It can mean feeling really taken aback. What would that look like?

It can mean almost jumping out of your skin! What would that look like?

How would it affect the way you listen, speak, walk? Stand up and give it a try!

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## Discussion questions and exercises:

1. Choose an emotion we discussed. When have you felt that way?
  - a. What did it feel like in your body?
  - b. How did you respond? (In other words, how did it make you behave?)
  - c. How did other people around you react to your behavior?

*get up*  
**ON YOUR FEET**

Ask a volunteer to stand up in front of the group. Have them choose an emotion (but not say it out loud!) and walk around. Encourage them to feel that emotion in their body, let it change the way they move, how their face looks, how they behave. Let the class try to guess what emotion they are portraying. When someone guesses correctly, that person goes next!

2. We reviewed six feelings: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, surprise.
  - a. Have you ever felt more than one feeling at one time? When?
  - b. Have you ever felt one feeling and noticed it changed into another? (For example, maybe a friend said they couldn't come over and you felt sad (or angry, or surprised, or disgusted), but then another friend said they could come over, and it turned to happiness (or surprise, or fear (if that friend was a mountain lion)). Discuss!

*get up*  
**ON YOUR FEET**

Invite two volunteers to stand. One is Giver, the other is Responder. Have the audience call out an emotion for Responder to portray (encourage body language, facial expressions). Then have Giver say or do something to change Responder's emotion - they can give them a compliment or deliver bad news or yell "boo!" (It's up to them!) Then have Responder portray the new emotion! Have the class guess that new emotion.

**BONUS:** Have Responder portray varying intensities of their emotion (say, from contentment to happiness to ecstasy!). Have the class discuss how Responder's face and body change.





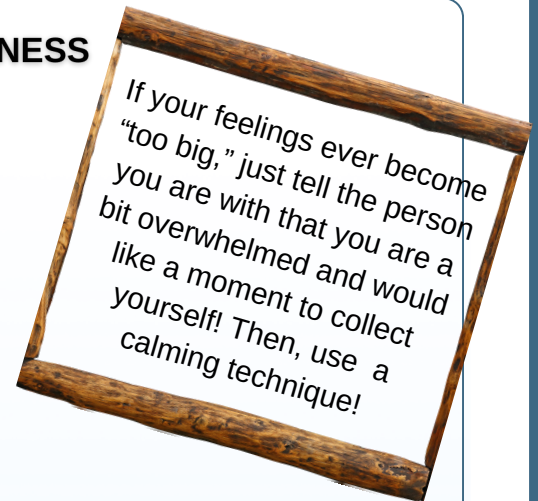
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Calming technique spotlight: **MINDFULNESS**

What is “mindfulness?”

It is a way of thinking and behaving that allows us to become calm, quiet our mind, and focus on where we are in the moment.

It is a practice that helps us get control of our feelings and stop a meltdown.



If your feelings ever become “too big,” just tell the person you are with that you are a bit overwhelmed and would like a moment to collect yourself! Then, use a calming technique!

How do we do it?

1. Place your hand on a nearby chair back, table, or even a wall for balance.
  2. Stand with feet hip width apart.
  3. Look straight ahead. Then close your eyes halfway, but not all the way.
  4. Tune in to your breathing for a few moments.
  5. Feel the lifting and falling of your belly.
  6. Pay attention to your lower stomach (you can even put your other hand on it).
- Then, choose an exercise to do (say the instructions to yourself in your head)!

### **Feet First script:**

“Focus on the bottom of your feet. Slowly move your toes. How do they feel? What can the bottom of your foot feel? Can you feel your shoes? Can you feel your socks? Can you feel the floor? Can you feel the top of your foot? Think about how your feet feel. Slowly open your eyes. Say to yourself, ‘I feel calm.’”

### **Hear, Here script:**

“Listen to the sounds around you. Try to pick out three sounds and identify each. Is it a car driving past? Is it a bird singing? Is it the sound of your breath? Are the sound loud or soft? High pitched or low? Then find the sound of your breath. Breathe in and out three times slowly. Open your eyes. You are here.”

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## **Gratitude script:**

“Take a minute to think about something you are grateful for. It could be a person, a positive experience, or something simple like a cool breeze or a soft shirt. Imagine how having this thing feels in your body. Does it make you feel warm? Does it make you feel calm? Does it make you smile? Breathe in and out slowly as you picture it. Then, open your eyes. Keep that feeling of gratitude.”

## **Breathe in the Light script:**

“Take a deep breath in through your nose. Imagine you are breathing in all the light around you. The light is filling your lungs. Then slowly breathe out through your lips, like you are quietly blowing out a candle. Imagine you are blowing out all the darkness and any bad feelings. It is all escaping your body with the breath. The only thing left in you is light. Do this two more times. Then, slowly open your eyes.”

## **Forgiveness script:**

“Take a slow, deep breath in. Hold it for a moment, then slowly breathe out of your mouth. Feel your shoulders lower and relax as you breathe out. Although your eyes are closed, imagine you are facing the person or people you were just talking to. Imagine them looking back at you gently, smiling, understanding. Feel your shoulders relax more. Now imagine yourself saying to them, ‘May you be heard and understood. May you feel valued and respected. I forgive you and I forgive myself. May we work together to find peace.’ Repeat this phrase twice. Understand that however they are looking at you when you open your eyes, you wish these good things for them and for yourself. Slowly exhale once more. Now, slowly open your eyes.”

Now, give yourselves a big round of applause and go do some improv!